

# How to Stop Junk Mail

Susannah Dowell, Ecco Verde, Inc.

Did you know that every year, 4 million tons of junk mail is sent, and 44% percent of that is never even opened? From items ordered online to catalogue purchases to telemarketers obtaining your address over the phone, most organizations will resell your information to other companies, revealing your home as a target for more unwanted junk mail.

Although it can often be recycled, junk mail is often made from virgin paper, a very limited natural resource. Reducing the amount of junk mail before it's sent to your house is the best option, as recycling requires energy and resources and makes its own impact on the environment.

Here are some steps you can take as a consumer to reduce the amount of junk mail you receive:

- ✓ Remove your name and address from most national mailing lists by contacting the Direct Marketing Association's (DMA) Mail Preference Service, P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008. Your request will be active for three to five years.
- ✓ Envelopes with "Address Correction Requested" or "Return Postage Guaranteed" can be returned unopened. Cross out the address and bar code, circle the first-class postage and write "Refused - Return to Sender" on the envelope. The sender will have to pay for the return postage. (Returning bulk is futile since the post office just throws it away.)
- ✓ Contact your credit card company, and ask them not to sell your name.
- ✓ When you give money to a charity or nonprofit group, enclose a note requesting that the organization not rent, sell or exchange your name and address with anyone else.
- ✓ Have your name removed from nationwide sweepstakes:
  - Publishers Clearinghouse, 101 Channel Drive, Port Washington, NY 11050. (800) 645-9242, or send e-mail to [pch@ant.net](mailto:pch@ant.net).
  - Reader's Digest, Readers Digest Road, Pleasantville, NY 10570. (800) 234-9000.
  - American Family Publishers, P.O. Box 62000, Tampa, FL 33662. (800) 237-2400.
- ✓ Don't fill out the product-warranty card. They are used to collect information on your habits and income.
- ✓ Never enter contests that require your phone number. This is one of many ways that telemarketers look up your name and address.
- ✓ Be cautious about placing your picture, address, and phone number on the internet.
- ✓ Store "club" cards are used with price scanners to track your purchases and send you junk mail. This is especially easy for the store to do if you are using their proprietary "club" or "member" card. Avoid using these cards if at all possible.

You might not think you alone have the power to help the environment. But think about this—to make one ton of paper, these resources are needed:

- 17 trees
- 7,000 gallons of water
- 4200 kWh (enough to heat your home for ½ year)
- 390 gallons of oil
- 60 pounds of air pollutants.

If only 100,000 people stopped their junk mail, we could save up to 150,000 trees a year. And if every American citizen recycled one out of every ten of their newspapers, 25 million trees would be saved annually. So it is true—you alone can make a difference environmentally simply by recycling the paper you receive and by removing your name from junk mail lists.

Information provided in courtesy by <http://www.greenhome.com/learn/reduce/Junk.shtml>,  
<http://www.richmond.ky.us/Recycling/Whyto.htm>